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GENERAL NOTES

The Twenty-third Meeting of the American Astronomical Society.—The meeting was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, September 2-5, and again we experienced the hospitality of a college town and have added the University of Michigan to our long list of hosts. The meeting was held in conjunction with the American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America. Nothing was overlooked by the committee of arrangements which would add to our comfort. The Newberry Residence, a woman's dormitory, was opened for our use, and two ladies came especially to take care of it for our benefit. The Michigan Union, a great club house for the Alumni not yet finished, opened its artistic grill room for us, and a corps of young women volunteered to act as waitresses without compensation.

A reception was given to us at the Observatory house one evening, during which there was an opportunity of inspecting the instruments and seeing the great spectrograph put to work. The mirror is covered by a large closet which is never opened until the temperature outside and inside are nearly the same. The new building gives plenty of space for office and student use, as well as room for the library. We were also entertained at luncheon here.

Perhaps the most interesting social function was the joint dinner given by the three societies, at which nearly two hundred people were present, including several residents of the city. The speeches at this dinner forever dispelled the illusion that scientists can not be entertaining, for the speakers scintillated with wit, and a remarkable collection of amusing stories was told. The toastmaster was Professor Slaught of the University of Chicago, who was in a most happy vein. Addresses of welcome were given by Mr. Beal, the resident regent, and Professor Beman of the Mathematics department. These were responded to by representatives of the three societies, our own being Dr. Schlesinger. Dr. Klotz of the Dominion Observatory at Ottawa was called upon to speak for our sister to the north. Introducing a serious vein, he begged us in view of the present great crisis not to forget the great human things in our pursuit of the pure sciences, and defined culture as moral, intellectual and aesthetic reverence. Dr. Stebbins told some amusing personal experiences at the International Conference in Brussels. Professor Hedrick of the University of Missouri described his work with the schools for soldiers in France after the armistice. He depicted in a thrilling way the response of the men and the great need in our own country of more interest on the part of intellectual leaders in the general education of the people. Personally, I was very glad that some reference was made to this problem. We all see the confusion of thought that reigns in the public mind at the present time, and no group of trained thinkers should come together without expressing in some way their responsibility toward an education which will help to produce clear and straightforward thinking.

Since abstracts of the papers presented will be published in *Popular Astronomy*, it is not necessary to give any detailed report of them here, tho some interesting points may be noted. The slides for Dr. Pettit's paper on the prominence of May 29, 1919 (the date of the total solar eclipse) were very fine, showing wonderful details of structure and remarkable motion. The same prominence appeared on Dr. Bauer's slide of the eclipsed Sun taken on the same date in Liberia.

Professor Brown informed us that he was preparing a simplified treatment of the theory of probabilities suitable to teach to Freshmen. He said that the Law of Least Squares is the integrated experience of humanity.

Very great interest was shown in Dr. Hale's account of the testing of the comparative efficiency of the 60-inch and 100-inch telescopes, and the slides were called for a second time.

At the election of officers, Dr. Schlesinger was unanimously elected to serve as our next president, and when called upon for a speech, he thanked us for the confidence we had shown by electing him to succeed two such distinguished men as Newcomb and Pickering.

The spirit of the meeting was one of friendly comradeship and coöperation, but we were sorry not to have any representatives from the two great observatories in California. The place of the next meeting was not announced, but I think all agreed in preferring a college town to a large city.

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The Planets in the Morning Sky.—To early risers the last quarter of the present year offers unusual opportunities for the study of the apparent motions of the planets.[1] *Mars*, *Jupiter*, *Saturn* and *Neptune* are apparently near neighbors on October 1st. *Mars* was in conjunction with *Jupiter* on September 2nd and will gradually draw away from it toward the south and east during the rest of the year. About 4 A. M: on October 24th it passes within 5′ of *Saturn*, as Professor McNeill has pointed out. The two planets will then form a remarkably bright, close "double star," as viewed without a telescope, for 5′ is less than twice the limiting distance at which two stars can be seen separately with the unaided eye. *Neptune* is a little over a degree west and south of *Jupiter* on October 1st, and the distance between them will not increase greatly by the end of the year, but, of course, *Neptune* cannot be seen without a telescope.

Venus is visible south and east of these four planets thruout the quarter year and is, indeed, the brightest star-like object in the sky. Still nearer the southeastern horizon *Mercury* may be seen on very clear mornings in December; and the waning Moon, as it approaches the new-moon phase in each month, will prove an added attraction. *Uranus* is the only absentee. It is on the other side of the Sun and is visible in the evening sky in the southwest.

Doubtless those who read in the stars prognostications of terrestrial events will find in this beautiful grouping of the planets the warning of some great calamity; for it is a noteworthy fact that their prophecies are always of evil, never of good. One such seer has already published his warning in the daily papers. A year ago he also made the "discovery" that the influenza, then epidemic, was caused by the presence of *Jupiter* at the node of its orbit! Just how, he did not trouble to explain; nor did he tell us why (since *Jupiter* passes one or the other of its two nodes every six years, its revolution period being 11.86 years) we have not had thruout the centuries an influenza epidemic every six years, or every twelve years if the planet breeds pestilence at but one of its nodes.

A Southern Star Catalog.—Volume V of the publications of the La Plata Observatory consists of a catalog of 7412 stars in the zone −52° to −57° declination (1875) for the epoch 1925 prepared by

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[1] See Professor McNeill's *Planetary Phenomena* in the present number and the August number of these PUBLICATIONS.

Paul T. Delavan. In a general way, it was the purpose of the work to extend the plan of the Astronomische Gesellschaft to the more southern skies, and this volume is to be followed by a similar one for the zone −57° to −62° based on observations made by Señor Felix Aguilar. But the working list, including all stars as bright as 9.0 magnitude, is taken from the *Cape Photographic Durchmusterung* rather than from the *Cordoba* (visual) *Durchmusterung*; and the *Catalogue of 687 Standard Stars* by Lewis Boss is adopted for the fundamental stars instead of the fundamental catalog of Auwers. In general, at least two observations, one in each position of the instrument, were secured for each star, the average number being 2.43. A few stars were measured in part or wholly with the equatorial telescope. The probable error of a catalog position is $0''.28$ in each coördinate, an accuracy which compares favorably with the best of the A. G. catalogs.